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## *The President's Daily Brief*

~~Top Secret~~ 22 July 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S  
DAILY BRIEF  
22 JULY 1968

1. Czechoslovakia -  
Soviet Union

It seems clear that the two sides are headed for the negotiating table, but Czechoslovakia is stalling until Soviet troops are out of the country. At last report not all the troops had gone, although their departure was continuing.

A well-informed Czechoslovak source has told our embassy that Prague would be willing to make some concessions. These might include an end to Czech criticism of the Warsaw Pact structure, a moratorium on independent moves in foreign policy, and restraint in treating the role of the Soviets in the repressions of the past.

The regime made it clear in Friday's central committee resolution, however, that the basic principles underlying its policies were not negotiable. Certainly the concessions mentioned by the embassy source do not go to the heart of the complaints in last week's letter from Warsaw.

Moscow too has shown little inclination to yield on fundamental issues. Pravda did take pains yesterday to deny that the letter from Warsaw constituted an ultimatum to Prague. In general, however, the Soviets have kept up their drumfire of propaganda on the "counter-revolutionary threat" to Czechoslovakia.

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2. Malaysia-  
Philippines

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The Malaysians have a report that a Philippine infiltration group is headed for Sabah. Although they themselves are dubious about the report's validity, they have moved ten naval craft to Sabah. The Filipinos, who have a flotilla of their own near Malaysian waters, apparently have not yet learned of the Malaysian move.

Although there is an obvious danger that these precautionary measures will lead to fighting, both sides seem to be working in private to ease their strained relations.

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3. Soviet Union

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We now tend to believe that the Caspian sea monster--the huge aircraft-like vehicle under development in a Caspian port--is an experimental air-foil ship, possibly a prototype of a high speed marine transport vehicle. It is 300 feet long and is powered by ten jet engines--eight in the nose and two in the tail assembly. The craft weighs between 500,000 and one million pounds. The C-5A, by contrast, is 246 feet long and weighs 323,000 pounds.

4. Soviet Union -  
Venezuela

Some of the Soviet tankers in the Cuban trade apparently will carry petroleum produced by Western firms in Venezuela on their trips back to Europe. These services

will provide Moscow with an additional source of foreign exchange and will in effect subsidize Soviet oil shipments to Cuba.

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## 5. Nigeria

Federal and Biafran representatives have agreed on an agenda for talks which are to take place soon in Addis Ababa, but neither side has budged significantly on substance. We think Lagos will persist in its demands for a Biafran renunciation of secession, since Gowon would be in trouble with his top advisers if he did anything else. As for the Biafrans, their campaign to bring world pressure to bear on Lagos is probably going well enough to discourage any concessions on their part.

Thus, although the chances have improved that relief supplies will start flowing soon, we do not think an end to the war is much closer than it was before the two sides agreed to meet.

## 6. India

Word of Soviet arms sales to Pakistan has given Mrs. Gandhi's critics a chance to pounce on her

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These critics, both in and out of the Congress Party, will be arguing that the arms sales spell the failure of her policy of close ties with the Soviets.

Since she is her own foreign minister, Mrs. Gandhi will have to take the brunt of the attack

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We do not expect a concerted move against her from inside the party, however, unless her performance is particularly poor. The Congress majority in Parliament is just too thin to permit extensive intraparty squabbling. Moreover, although she has alienated some important Congress figures, she remains a formidable power in party circles.

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY*

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S  
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam  
for the President's Eyes Only

22 July 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Negotiations and the Liberation Front: Vietnamese Communist commentary during the weekend reinforces the impression that Hanoi is no longer insisting that a political settlement must be "in accordance with" the program of the National Liberation Front. This shift has been in train for months, but was formalized in a foreign ministry memorandum last week.

Xuan Thuy continued to obfuscate the issue during public appearances in Paris, but North Vietnamese propaganda is less obscure and seems to underline the change. A Hanoi broadcast in English on 20 July summarizing a Liberation Front press commentary concludes by saying that the internal affairs of South Vietnam should be settled in accordance with the "spirit" of the Front program. This language was not in the Front commentary the radio was reviewing, but it was used in the foreign ministry memorandum. Front broadcasts and commentary have simply avoided the "in accordance" formulation. The chief of the Front mission in Hanoi referred to a settlement "in keeping" with the Front program at a meeting on 20 July, according to a Hanoi broadcast.

Even Ho Chi Minh's much vaunted "appeal" on the anniversary of the Geneva Accords contains at least a hint of this shift in Communist tactics. The appeal is the usual propaganda fare for such occasions, but it gives special prominence in one passage to the new Communist front organization, the Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces. It mentions the National Liberation Front only in saying that the South Vietnamese are fighting under the Front's banner.



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The concept of a "third force" embodied in the Alliance is now a fundamental part of the Vietnamese Communist strategy for a settlement. Plans for using the concept are being kept deliberately vague, however.

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Such vague hints fit a growing pattern suggesting the Communists are angling for a political voice in South Vietnam via the Alliance concept, if not via the Alliance itself. There is no evidence that the Communists are changing their basic position of categorically refusing to deal with the so-called "Thieu-Ky clique," but their evolving tactics suggest they may be more flexible on this key issue than indicated by their standard position.

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Delay in Return of US Pilots: Rumors about the three American pilots released by Hanoi were widespread this weekend. Reports they were going to surface in Pakistan or in Europe did not pan out.

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Our best guess is that they will come out on the ICC flight from Hanoi to Vientiane next Friday.

The reason for the delay is not clear.

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At the ceremony last week in which the pilots were turned over to the pacifists, however, the Communists pointedly contrasted the release with "intensified" US air attacks in both North and South Vietnam. Hanoi may have delayed the pilots' travel in order to sound out US intentions further.

The only recent word from Hanoi on the pilots' status is a curiously phrased reply which the North

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Vietnamese news agency gave yesterday to a French press query. The agency said the three pacifists were still in Hanoi and that "we therefore presume" the pilots are still in North Vietnam, "since they should in principle leave with their compatriots under the latter's responsibility."

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North Vietnamese Meet Polish ICC Rep: Hanoi Radio noted on 18 July that Premier Pham Van Dong had received Ambassador Stanislaw Dobrowolski, the new chief of the Polish delegation to the International Control Commission. The Pole has also called on Foreign Minister Trinh and a vice minister of defense. These are only courtesy calls, but the Poles may have picked up some tidbits about North Vietnam's current attitude toward the ICC, and more broadly, about the possibilities or re-establishing some of the military provisions of the Geneva Agreements.

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## II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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